

# Neighborhood Workbook

## Section Three: What's Included in a Neighborhood or Community Plan

# 3



"Great friends make great neighborhoods.  
Great neighborhoods make great cities.  
Great cities make great nations.  
Great nations make a great world."

--*Anonymous*

**Neighborhood Plan**

- 1 square mile
- 4,000 to 10,000 residents
- About 1,500 dwellings
- Number supporting an elementary school

**Community Plan**

- 20,000 to 60,000 residents
- Number supporting a high school

A neighborhood plan is a blueprint that can guide future growth, development and revitalization in your area. Neighborhood plans usually focus on geographic areas of about one square mile, 4,000 to 10,000 residents or about 1,500 dwellings. A community plan focuses on a much larger area, usually between 20,000 and 60,000 people. A community plan has about the population necessary to support about one high school versus a neighborhood plan that can support about one elementary school.

Completing a plan involves a lot of community input at each stage in the process. During the planning process, community stakeholders (residents, school officials, community groups, property owners, businesses, etc.) discuss issues (what works/what could be better), develop priorities (what should be done first, second, etc.) develop goals (where do you want to go), and create strategies (how to get from today to where we want to be).

The Planning Department provides services to organizations that seek assistance in developing a goals and strategies report, a neighborhood or a community plan. The Goals and Strategies Report is the quickest and least time consuming of the three, and can represent the first official step of the neighborhood or community plan process. A Community Plan is more comprehensive, inclusive and thorough.

This chapter outlines what needs to be accomplished at each meeting and what should be included in the final plan. Each of the steps would need to be completed for both the neighborhood and community plans. While covering the same topics, a neighborhood or community plan takes a more detailed look at certain aspects of the planning area while a community plan may focus more on networks and connections within the planning area.



## THE DETAILS

The sidebar on the right shows an overview of the steps that are recommended to complete a plan. Below the same steps are described in greater detail.

### GET THE RIGHT PEOPLE AROUND THE TABLE

#### Recruiting a Planning Team

An important first step in a planning effort is to create a team of residents, business owners and additional community representatives to oversee and organize the planning process. Your planning team should include homeowners, renters, vacant property owners, businesses, churches, neighborhood association representatives, company representatives, developers, investors, and landlords. At your first planning team meeting, ask people to put dots on the planning area map to indicate where they live or work. Are all parts/sections of the planning area represented? Are any major commercial centers or corridors not represented? Getting representatives of all stakeholder groups involved is key to the success of a planning effort.

Because many different types of people have ties to your community, the planning team should not be comprised of only the membership of the local neighborhood organization. Do not forget to geographically represent the entire neighborhood when recruiting planning team members. The process would not be equitable if the planning team consisted entirely of members representing only one subsection of the neighborhood.

Make sure your planning team is large enough to produce results yet small enough to be manageable. The Planning Department suggests that your team be about six to ten members. However, your neighborhood is best served by doing what feels comfortable. If your neighborhood is full of active volunteers who work well together, a large planning team made up of more than fifteen members may be most effective.

The members of the Planning Team will spend time organizing public meetings including writing agendas, reserving the location, setting up, and most importantly publicizing the event. A more detailed description of these activities is located in Section 5: Holding a Good Meeting. An example Neighborhood Plan schedule is attached in the Appendix 4.



Place a dot where you live or work

### NEIGHBORHOOD & COMMUNITY PLAN OVERVIEW

- ☐ Recruit the Planning Team
- ☐ Sign the MOU
- ☐ Learn about your Neighborhood
- ☐ Hold Kick-off Celebration
- ☐ Hold 1st and 2nd Public Meetings
- ☐ Form Work Groups/ Technical Committees
- ☐ Conduct the Interdepartmental Review
- ☐ Hold a Final Public Meeting
- ☐ Plan Adoption
- ☐ Plan Implementation

**Hints for Recruiting a Planning Team**

- Contact area leaders with flexible work schedules.
- Contact college students with special skills.
- Contact businesses willing to donate services or meeting space.
- Ask association past and present board members or long time residents with knowledge of neighborhood

What does a planning team do?

- Develop a leadership structure (chairpersons, etc.) for getting work done that is acceptable to everyone involved.
- Identify plan boundaries with the support of the plan area's neighborhoods
- Determine how much meeting time is needed, choose a convenient time and place
  1. Publicize the meetings
  2. Take care of logistics
  3. Help keep the meeting on schedule
- Set an agenda for each meeting and workshop consistent with the program (*see Section 5 on how to have a good meeting*)
- Review meeting results
- Collect preliminary data
- Collect the necessary equipment/materials

**SIGN THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU)**

The purpose of the MOU is to ensure that the plan is developed in an open manner involving neighborhood stakeholders, consistent with City policies, and is a reflection of the community's values. The MOU includes a list of the Planning Team and Planning Department staff responsibilities towards the completion of the plan. The signing of the agreement forms the relationship between the community and the Planning Department. The work program or schedule also is included in the MOU. This document is a requirement for those groups that apply for Planning Department assistance. (*see example in Appendix 2*)

**LEARN ABOUT YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD**

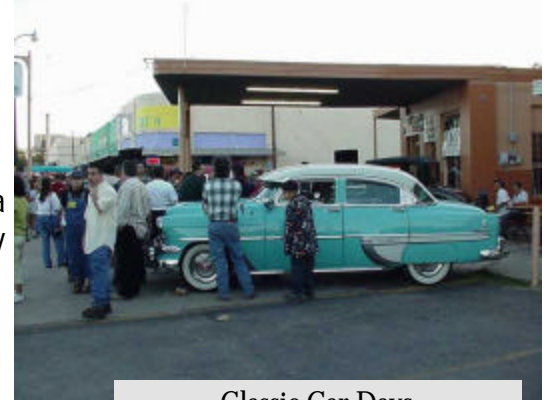
This step involves collecting and analyzing data about your neighborhood. It is most helpful to show a comparison between your area and the City as a whole. For example, some recent plans have compared such numbers as neighborhood age breakdown, income and poverty, educational attainment, housing, ethnicity, households, and household income. Your group will continue to learn more about your area throughout the planning process. Talk to your neighbors to get a feel for neighborhood issues, people's impressions are also as important as the factual data collected. (*Section 6 provides a detailed examination of research methods.*)

## HOLD KICK-OFF CELEBRATION

Get your neighbors excited and enthusiastic about improving the area. *(Section 5 provides a detailed outline of how to prepare for a neighborhood meeting.)*

### Why have a Kick-Off Celebration?

- Welcome participants and introduce the person(s) who initiated the meeting.
- Introduce and explain the planning process to the neighborhood
- Describe the preliminary schedule and proposed tasks for the planning process
- Describe the purpose of the meeting, define a Neighborhood or Community Plan and explain why the planning process is being initiated.
- Recruit additional participants
- Meet your neighbors and get excited about working together



Classic Car Days  
Celebration

## FIRST PUBLIC MEETING

### Mapping the Neighborhood Strengths and Weaknesses.

What happens at the First Public Meeting?

- Learn about basic neighborhood information including land use and demographic data (i.e. population, age, racial composition, sex, median household income, etc.) for the area.
- Identify/describe and map plan area strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOTs).

### Welcome and Introductions

- Welcome participants and introduce the person(s) who initiated the meeting.
- Describe the purpose of the meeting, what has been accomplished at the last meetings, and where the process stands now.
- Illustrate the boundaries of the planning area using a neighborhood map, describe a land use map and how it's helpful and describe how they compare to your neighborhood association's boundaries.
- Review the basic demographic and land use data you have collected so that everyone begins on the same page. *(Section 6 details how to learn more about your neighborhood.)*

**Why Use Breakout Groups?**

- Gives all a chance to speak (many more than in a large group setting)
- It is more comfortable for people who are unlikely to speak in front of the entire group.

Prompts new thoughts and suggestions, as good ideas feed off of each other.

**Prepare for Breakout Groups**

- Describe what breakout sessions are by explaining that the collective group will be broken into smaller groups to discuss neighborhood strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOTs) as well as goals and strategies.
- Break into groups by numbering off (1, 2, 1, 2, etc.), this breaks up couples and separates any "cliques".
- Review with participants the ground rules for small groups (found on the next page sidebar), then ask all participants in the larger group setting and again at the breakout tables to agree to following these guidelines for the day's discussion.
- Each breakout group should have 2 facilitators, one to manage the discussion and the second facilitator to take notes on the flip chart.

**Brainstorming SWOTs in Breakout Groups.**

The following definition of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOTs) and the process of SWOTs analysis should be explained to workshop participants:

**SWOTs** can provide valuable insight on everything from land use issues to crime problems in your area. Participants are asked to state a strength or weakness and its location. By both writing issues down on flip charts and locating them on a large map the group can gain new insight into their problems and opportunities. For example, a graffiti problem near a school might be addressed differently than a graffiti problem in a business corridor. The community also might decide that an area has a higher priority.

Examples of strengths include:

- Location and accessibility to downtown, hospitals, and the highway
- Churches in the area
- Historical value (of properties, area of the City)
- Residents (diverse interests, concerns and knowledge)

Weaknesses could include:

- Lack of code compliance on X, Y, and Z street
- Crime, gangs, graffiti, vagrants
- Vacant lots and houses by the school
- Lack of nearby grocery store
- Poor relationship with councilperson

Opportunities and threats are activities that can impact your neighborhood either positively, negatively, or both.

- Facilitators should make participants aware that they must address strengths as well as weaknesses and opportunities as well as threats. People often tend to focus on the negative without recognizing the positive. Facilitators must make every effort to ensure that this tendency is avoided. Spend an equal amount of time on both the strengths and weaknesses of the neighborhood.
- As you conduct your SWOTs analysis, ask the following questions (give participants about 15 minutes to answer each question):
  1. What's good about our neighborhood?
  2. What's bad about our neighborhood?
- SWOTs should be recorded on the flip chart and the neighborhood map throughout the work session. When SWOTs are located on the neighborhood map, it may become obvious where your efforts need to be directed. In addition, this visual aid will assist your work groups as strategies are developed.



Mapping the strengths and weaknesses

In addition to the questions that will be asked during the workshop, the following methods of SWOTs analysis can help prepare your neighborhood for its first workshop. Assign a team of neighborhood volunteers to conduct one or both of these methods and ask them to bring the results to the first workshop. The results will serve as visual aids – allowing all participants to visualize the area's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, or threats. These two SWOTs preparation methods are described as follows:





Example of a neighborhood strength,: a clean streetscape

### The Camera Method

The Camera Method involves photographing specific areas of the neighborhood and documenting the location, date, time, and photo classification (whether it displays a strength, weakness, opportunity, or threat). A brief description of the area in question as well as ideas on how to improve it also can be given. A worksheet for you to use during your camera SWOTs analysis is provided in appendix 2 of this workbook.

### The Camcorder Method

Your SWOTs analysis also can be performed using a camcorder. For each segment you film, provide an informational narrative, which briefly describes the scene, states your opinions of it, and cites ideas for improvement. In addition to being viewed at your neighborhood workshop, it is recommended that you view your videotaped SWOTs analysis with Planning Team members, City Council, boards, and commissions.

### Choose the Top 3 or 5 Issues

- Once breakout groups have completed the SWOTs brainstorming, participants should reach consensus on the 3 or 5 issues that are most important to the group.
- Once consensus is reached the 3 or 5 most important issues should be identified on the flip chart list.

### Regroup and Consolidate Issues

- After the top 3 or 5 issues have been identified, all individual breakout groups should reunite in the big group.
- Representatives from each individual breakout group should take their flip sheets and work maps to the front of the room and present their breakout group's findings to the collective group.
- After all the groups have presented, the big group should work on consolidating the issues of concern into 4 or 5 priority issues. Consolidating the issues of concern should be fairly easy, as two or three of the issues are likely to be similar. Moreover, if two issues are different but relate to the same topic, they can be combined into one larger issue. This process is what is meant by consolidation. Consolidation relies on the principle of group consensus.



Combine all ideas from this public meeting into one handout and one map. The handout should organize all the ideas by topic. For example, group ideas into housing, education, transportation, or community facilities as categories. This handout will be used during the second public meeting.

## SECOND PUBLIC MEETING

### Reviewing neighborhood strengths and weaknesses

What happens at the Second Public Meeting?

- Review and refine the draft strengths and weaknesses handout and map organized by subject area.
- Review proposed land use categories and develop the Land Use Plan
- Ask participants to sign up for one of the three work groups or technical committees; Heart of the Neighborhood, Getting Around Town/Rebuilding Our Infrastructure, and Community Places Where We Gather, Learn and Play.

### Welcome and Introductions

- Welcome participants and introduce the person(s) who initiated the meeting.
- Describe the purpose of this meeting, what has been accomplished thus far in the process, and what will be left to accomplish.

### Prepare for Breakout Groups

- Describe what breakout sessions are by explaining that the collective group will be broken into smaller groups to discuss and comment on each the strengths and weaknesses, stress that equal time is to be spent on each.
- Break into groups by numbering off (1, 2, 1, 2, etc.), this breaks up couples and separates any "cliques".
- Review with participants the ground rules for small groups (*found on sidebar*), then ask all participants in the larger group setting and again at the breakout tables to agree to following these guidelines for the day's discussion.
- Review the SWOTs ideas and the proposed land use categories.
- Develop a land use plan based on public input and planning principles.

### Brainstorming Step by Step

- Define your problem (please note that the word "problem" is not necessarily negative). Write out your problem concisely and make sure that everyone understands the problem and is in agreement with the way it is worded. There is no need to put a lot of restrictions on your problem at this time.

- Give yourselves a time limit. Larger groups may need more time to get everyone's ideas out.

- Everyone must shout out solutions to the problem while one person writes them down. There must be **ABSOLUTELY NO CRITICIZING OF IDEAS**. No matter how impossible or how silly an idea is, it must be written down. Criticism is not encouraged.

- Once your time is up, select the five ideas which you like best. Make sure everyone involved in the brainstorming session is in agreement.

- Write down about five criteria for judging which ideas best solve your problem. Criteria should start with the word "should", for example, "it should be cost effective", "it should be legal", "it should be possible to finish before July 15", etc.

- Give each idea a score of 0 to 5 points depending on how well it meets each criterion. Once all of the ideas have been scored for each criterion, add up the scores.

- The idea with the highest score will best solve your problem. But you should keep a record of all of your best ideas and their scores in case your best idea turns out not to be workable.

### Ground Rules for Small Groups

1. **Be courteous.** Respectfully acknowledge the thoughts and ideas of others.
2. **Share your ideas.** If you have something important to say, speak up and let it be heard by all. The only bad idea is an unspoken idea. The ideas and opinions of everyone are equally important.
3. **Be specific and concise – No speeches!** Your facilitators bear the responsibility of controlling speeches in their individual workgroups. If just one speech is allowed to happen, it can lead to a windfall of speeches – causing the workshop to drag on forever, never producing clear or useful feedback. With everyone agreeing at the beginning to follow the ground rules, cutting off speeches will be simpler and group members can help one another abide by the ground rules.
4. **Listen to others.** Be polite and do not interrupt. Everyone deserves a chance to speak and be heard.

### WORK GROUPS/TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

Work group or technical committee participation is voluntary and will involve meeting about once every other week for about 2 months. These work groups will develop goals, objectives, action steps and indicators based on ideas and data gathered at earlier meetings, and information provided by department and agency liaisons. The work group/technical committee categories are: Heart of the Neighborhood, Getting Around Town, Rebuilding Our Infrastructure, and Places Where We Gather, Learn and Play. (See Section 7 for more information on developing action steps.) The Heart of the Neighborhood group would focus on discussing land use, economic development, employment and housing issues. The Getting Around Town group focuses on transportation networks, streets, and maintenance issues. Community Places Where We Gather Play and Learn focuses on community facilities, school and community appearances, and health and safety.

A Planning Department staff person will be assigned to lead and coordinate meetings. The committee or work group will write the goals, objectives and action steps of the draft plan. The main elements are detailed later in this chapter. (see page 3 - 12)

### THIRD PUBLIC MEETING Reviewing the strategies

What happens at the Third Public Meeting?

- Have a representative from each work group present the draft goals, objectives and action steps for Heart of the Neighborhood, Getting around Town, Rebuilding Our Infrastructure, and Places where we Gather, Learn and Play in the form of a draft plan document.
- Allow community members the opportunity to review, affirm, and change the goals, objectives, action steps and indicators.
- Review to ensure consistency between each of the groups. Do any of the goals conflict? For example, if one of the Getting Around Town work group's goals was to increase the number of bus routes through neighborhood streets but if one of the goals of the Places Where We Gather, Play and Learn work group was to decrease bus cut through traffic both of these

goals would need to be revised.

### **Welcome and Introductions**

- Welcome participants and introduce the person(s) who initiated the meeting.
- Describe the purpose of this meeting, what has been accomplished thus far in the process, and what is left to accomplish.

### **Prepare for Breakout Groups**

- Describe what breakout sessions are by explaining that the collective group will be broken into smaller groups to discuss and comment on the draft map and draft plan, stress that equal time is to be spent on each.
- Break into groups by numbering off (1, 2, 1, 2, etc.), this breaks up couples and separates any "cliques".
- Review with participants the ground rules for small groups (found on the next page sidebar), then ask all participants in the larger group setting and again at the breakout tables to agree to following these guidelines for the day's discussion.

### **INTERDEPARTMENTAL REVIEW**

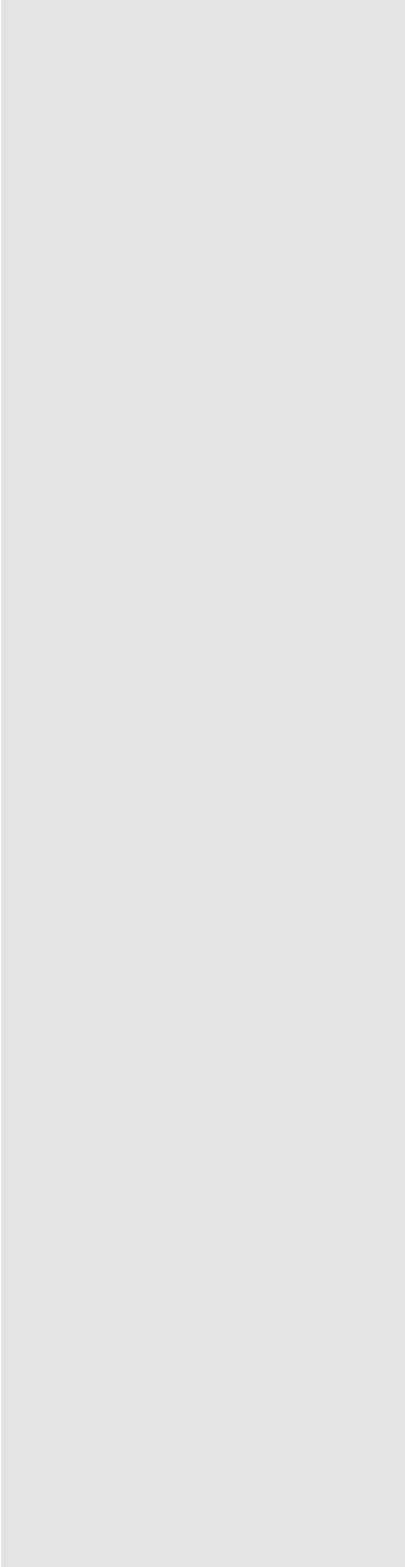
The plan is distributed to all relevant City Departments (City Attorney's Office, Asset Management, Development Services, Neighborhood Services, Community Initiatives, Cultural Affairs, Economic Development, Housing and Community Development, Parks and Recreation, and Public Works) to assure consistency. This step is required for groups that applied for formal assistance from the Planning Department and is not done with self-help groups.

### **FOURTH PUBLIC MEETING/OPEN HOUSE**

#### **Reviewing the Draft Plan**

A fourth meeting may not be necessary for self-help planning efforts. What happens at the Fourth Public Meeting?

- Review the final draft of the plan
  - ⇒ open house style
  - ⇒ work group presentation (Heart of the Neighborhood, Getting Around Town, Rebuilding Out Infrastructure, and Places Where We Gather, Learn and Play)
- Publicize plan to partners
- Begin to organize a community action group that will work to move the plan's recommendations toward imple-



mentation

### **PLAN ADOPTION**

By adopting the plan, the plan is used as a guide for decision making by City boards, commissions and departments. Only those groups working with the Planning Department can seek formal consideration of the plan by the Planning Commission and City Council. Planning Commission recommends the plan to City Council, City Council adopts the plan as a component of the city's Comprehensive Master Plan.

### **PLAN IMPLEMENTATION**

The plan, once adopted, becomes the primary implementation tool for your planning area. It lays out what will be done, when and by whom. Neighborhoods should be prepared to set up a regular schedule to check plan progress.

## What's Included in a Plan?

The following text describes the basic elements of a neighborhood or community plan.

### Name

Keep the name of your plan simple. Include the name of your plan on the front cover of the document.

### Cover Sheet

A cover sheet contains pertinent information about the Neighborhood or Community Plan: the name of your plan (you may want to include a map or pictures of your area on the cover page), the report's authors (your planning team), and an acknowledgement that the report is based on the ideas from your public meetings and workshops.

### Acknowledgements

Acknowledgements give credit to those organizers, volunteers, and staff members who dedicated their time and expertise to the Goals and Strategies setting process. An appendix should include the names, titles, and affiliations of participants who can answer questions about the report.

### Table of Contents

By providing readers with a list of the headings and their corresponding page numbers, a table of contents serves as a navigational tool, allowing readers to go directly to a topic of interest.

### Plan Basics

Before discussing the details of the plan, it is helpful to provide a quick overview of the purpose, content, plan area description for the reader. Think about this in terms of who will see the plan from outside of your neighborhood. Even people who live and work in the City will not know exactly where your neighborhood is located. This section usually is short, about five pages. A short introduction for the reader to your neighborhood is helpful to set the context for the plan. It also is helpful to include the basic current trends of the area.

### Summary of Goals and Objectives

This section includes a simplified listing of the goals and objectives found in the plan. Goals and objectives should be listed hierarchically, with the higher priority items listed

### Recommended to be included in Plan Basics

- name of neighborhood(s) and/or district(s)
- Plan area description, location (north, south, east, or west)
- distance from downtown and/or some prominent landmark
- neighborhood size (in square miles and/or number of blocks)
- boundaries
- the names of schools that serve the neighborhood
- neighborhood associations that are active in the neighborhood
- approximate number of residents and households
- racial composition
- median household income
- built environment character (i.e. mixed residential, predominantly small single family detached, etc.)
- general building conditions
- approximate occupancy rate
- approximate owner occupied rate
- median/average house value
- natural environment
- quality of life/what makes the neighborhood unique

before lower priority items. The following is an example taken from a Goals and Objectives section of an existing plan.

#### Heart of the Neighborhood

##### Goal 1: Economic Development

Revitalize and enhance the neighborhoods' historic commercial centers.

##### Objective 1.1: Historic Character

Preserve the historic character of the neighborhood commercial centers along XYZ streets.

##### Objective 1.2: Pedestrian Environment

Enhance the pedestrian environment in the area's commercial centers along XYZ Streets and ensure neighbors can walk or bike to area businesses.

#### Getting Around Town

##### Goal 1: Multi-Modal Transportation

Coordinate with the City of XYZ and the local transportation providers to ensure a safe, efficient, well-maintained, and aesthetically appealing multi-modal transportation system.

##### Objective 1.1: Pedestrian Network

Restore the pedestrian-friendly neighborhood environment by creating a pedestrian network that is safe, aesthetically appealing and effective.

##### Objective 1.2: Mass Transit – Service

Coordinate with Transit Authority to improve service delivery and to develop new transit routes through the neighborhood.

### **Plan Elements**

Your plan should address at least the following topics:

#### **1. Heart of the Neighborhood**

- Land use – Include a land use plan. The Land Use Plan identifies the location of different land uses (low density residential, mid density residential, neighborhood commercial, industrial, etc.) on a map of the planning area. The Land Use Plan indicates how vacant and occupied parcels should be developed in the future. For example, a vacant parcel identified as mid-density residential indicates the neighborhood's preference for townhouses or small



Mission San Juan Church

apartments to be developed at that site. An existing house identified as neighborhood commercial could indicate a neighborhood's preference for the home to become a coffee shop or gift shop.

- Economic Development/Employment – creation of opportunities, encouraging new business development and providing job training and placement assistance may be among the recommendations
- Housing – rehabilitating, maintaining characteristics of existing housing stock, encouraging maintenance of private property and yards

## **2. Getting Around Town**

- Transportation networks – car, bicycle, transit and pedestrian options and amenities.

## **3. Rebuilding Our Infrastructure**

- Streets – Drainage, potholes, enhancements (sidewalks, curbs, greenspace) as well as regular repair and maintenance.

## **4. Community Places Where We Play, Gather and Learn**

- Community facilities – recreation facilities and services, and cultural activities
- School and community appearance – Ask what you can do to ensure and promote a safe, clean, and healthy community. Should your neighborhood promote area-wide clean-ups, xeriscaping, or tree planting?
- Health and Safety – Is the law being broken in any way? Has Code Compliance been notified?



## Appendix

An appendix is a supplemental section of your plan that clarifies or supplements the main body of the report. Included in the plan's appendix is information that contains too much detail or is too long to place in the body of the paper without impeding the flow of the material. Your appendix could contain material like the work group meeting schedule or a copy of the survey used to gather information.

The following items are normally included in the Appendices.

- A history of the neighborhood -- here you can fully utilize all the historical information you found during the data collection process.
- Community Demographics
- Meeting Calendar
- Land Use—Zoning Matrix — this is a recommended list of zoning districts that are appropriate in each of the land use categories
- Capital Improvement Projects
- Supplemental Maps
- Letters of Support
- Ordinance and Resolution adopting the plan

